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ABSTRACT

The message of this series of books, "Parents and Children Together," is that parents should get together with their children, talk about stories, and learn together. This book, "Learning Together," contains several stories that parents and children can read together and talk about in a relaxed way. The book has a companion audiotape called "Teamwork Learning." Advice is given in the first part of the book as to the best way to go about reading together. In the second half of the book and on one side of the audio tape are ideas and guidelines for the interested parent. Following an introduction and a "getting started" section, the book is divided into these parts: (1) Read-Along Stories ("Brewster Rooster and the Thistle Whistle" by Dorothy Baughman; "A Friend for Ben" by John E. Moore; "Friday Night Fights" by Winston Munn); and (2) Guidelines for Parents (What Is Teamwork Learning?; Dialogue Journals: A Different Kind of "Talking Book"; Activities for Fun and Learning; and Books for Parents and Children). (NKA)

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Parents and Children Together SERIES

LEARNING TOGETHER

ED 464 338

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PLUS

Read-along Stories:

Brewster Rooster and the Thistle Whistle

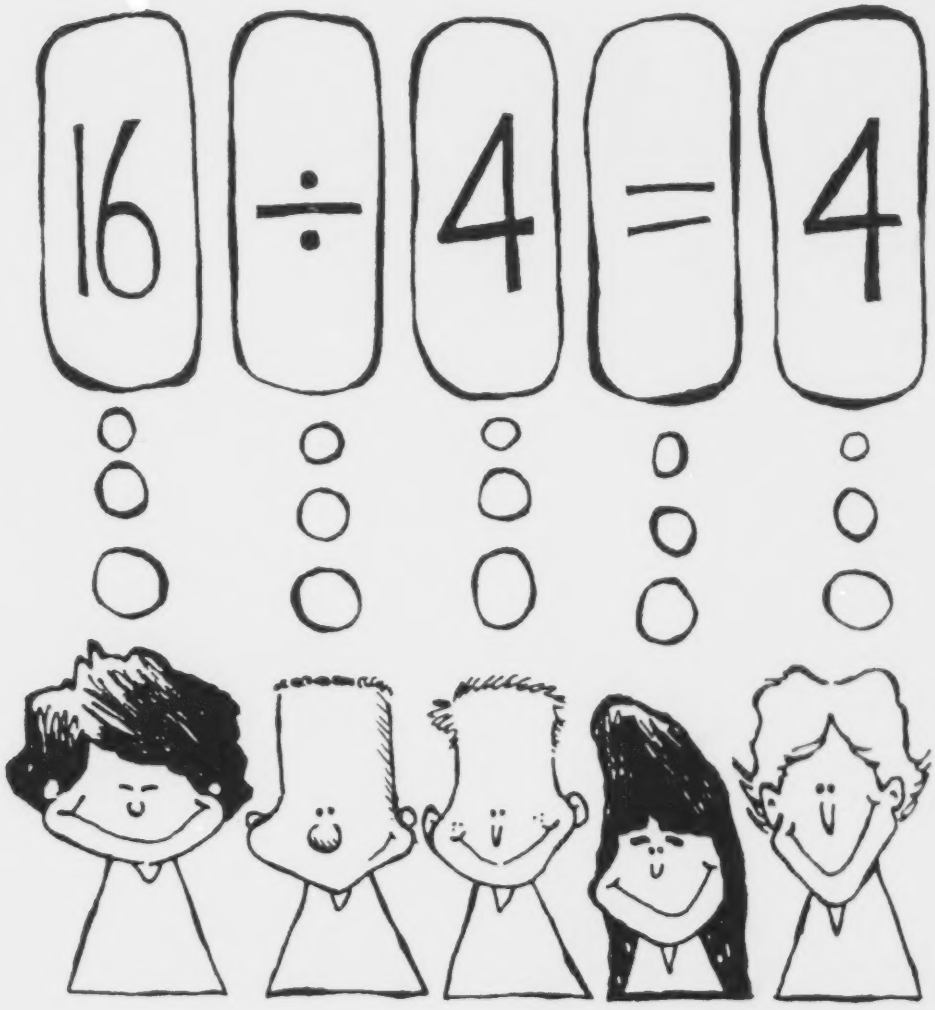
A Friend for Ben

Friday Night Frights

CS 510 938

Guidance and fun for parents and children, ages 4–9

This book has a companion audio tape also entitled "Teamwork Learning." Occasionally there are directions on the tape that do not appear in the book or headings in the book that aren't spoken on the tape.



Parents and Children Together SERIES
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Introduction

Get together with your children. Talk about stories and learn together. That's the message of this series of books, ***Parents and Children Together.***

You will find here several stories that you and your children can read together and talk about in a relaxed way. Some stories are more appropriate for younger children, some for children in grades three and four. Have fun with them but also use them as a way of guiding your child's thinking.

Before each story, you will be prompted to focus your attention. After the story, review some of the issues in a relaxed conversation. Please feel comfortable in making comments or asking questions when the two of you are reading a story together. Have fun along the way. The stories are performed as radio dramas on the accompanying audiotape. That gives your child a chance to read along with the voices on the tape.

In the second half of this book and on one side of the audiotape there are ideas and guidelines for the interested parent. On the topic of this particular volume you will find hints, practice activities, and books for further reading. If you want to use the tape as a way of preparing for reading with your child or in helping your child study, the tape gives you an opportunity to listen while you are driving or jogging.

For more ideas on any of the topics in this series, visit ***www.kidscanlearn.com*** or ***http://eric.indiana.edu***

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Getting Started

A family is like a team in many ways. In this book we show how the members of your family can work together and learn from one another.

On side B of the tape are three read-along stories. We encourage you to listen to these stories and to read them with your children so that they can participate in the excitement of story reading. Of course, your child can also listen to the stories alone, if you wish.

You may want to take some time to look ahead at these stories before you read along with your child. It is also important to talk about them ahead of time.

Before you read a story, talk about the title or things that might happen in it. Then, after you have finished reading, talk about what happened in the story. By the way, if in the middle of the story something funny or interesting happens, it's okay to stop the tape and discuss the event, or ask your child questions such as, "Do you know what a German Shepherd looks like?" or "Can you whistle? If so, whistle your favorite tune." These questions make your conversations about the story more meaningful and more valuable.

Part I
Read Along Stories

BORED,
BORED,
BORED....

Brewster Rooster and the Thistle Whistle

by Dorothy Baughman

Things to do *before* reading the story

Do you know how to whistle? There are many different ways to whistle. Some people can even whistle tunes. Ask Mom and/or Dad what kind of whistling they can do.

Brewster Rooster was bored. He walked from one end of the chicken yard to the other, grumbling. "I think I'll take a walk outside the chicken yard today," he said.

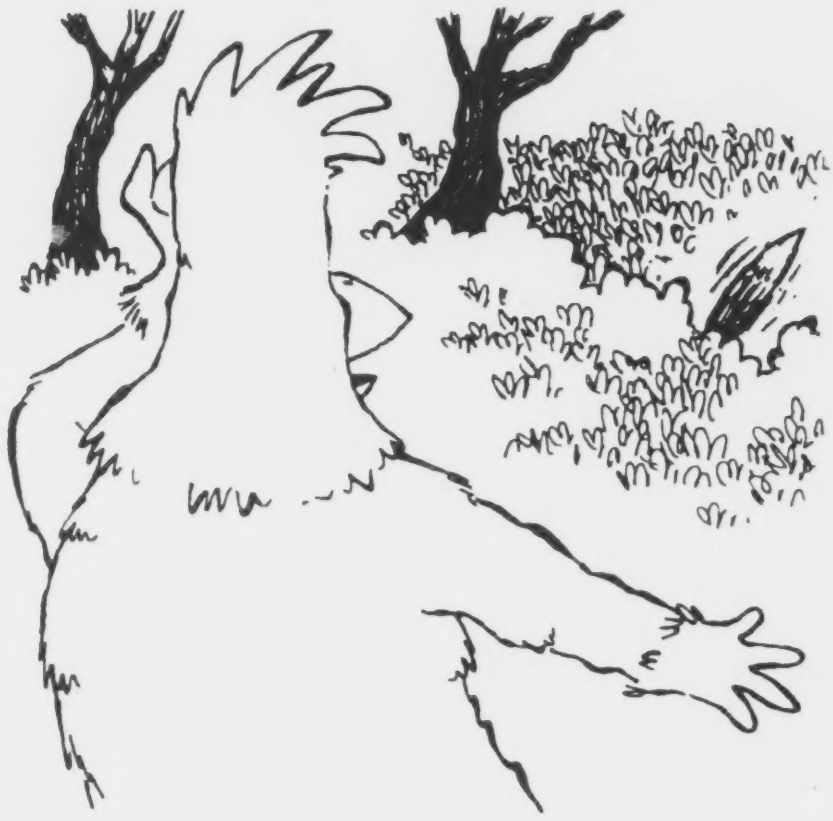
"You had better not," warned Harriet Hen. "You know old Filbert Fox is always waiting for a chicken dinner."

"No silly fox is going to catch me," bragged Brewster.

"I warned you," said Harriet, and she went on scratching.

"Humph," snorted Brewster, "I'm not worried about that stupid fox."

Brewster squeezed through the gate and walked slowly toward the woods. He picked here and he scratched there. Suddenly, he noticed something moving in the bushes. It frightened the big rooster. He was not so brave now.



"I-I-I hope that isn't the fox," he whispered to himself. Brewster walked slowly away from the bushes. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Filbert's fuzzy tail through the greenery.

"Oh dear me, it is the fox." Brewster walked faster. "I'll have to think of something to outsmart that fox. I can't outrun him now."

Suddenly Brewster noticed something on the ground. It was an old whistle that the farmer's children had dropped. Brewster picked it up, but it was broken. It would not whistle.

"This won't do me any good," said Brewster. "I can't even scare him away with this. It doesn't make a sound."

Suddenly an idea hit him. Brewster smiled. "Maybe I can outsmart him with this after all."

"Aha, chicken. I've got you now," shouted Filbert, and he raced toward Brewster.

But the chicken had started some sort of strange dance, and he ignored the fox.

"What are you doing, you silly chicken? Be still, so I can eat you."

"I am dancing to the music of my thistle whistle."

"And just what is a thistle whistle?"

"My poor fox, you are behind on the news. Thistle whistles are for very special animals, and I thought surely you would have heard of them. You are a member of the Animal Society, aren't you?"

"Of course," said the flustered fox. "I've been a member for years. I must have forgotten about the whistles." The fox did not want to appear stupid—especially in front of a chicken.

"Er, just what does a thistle whistle sound like? I seem to have forgotten that, too."

Brewster almost laughed out loud at this question, but he knew if he did not keep up his story, he would be Filbert's dinner.

"Well, you see, Mr. Fox, the thistle whistle has a soft, soothing sound, like the down of a thistle. That is where it gets its name, but it is so soft only special animals can hear it."

The chicken started his dance again. Round and round he danced. "Do you hear the beautiful music, Mr. Fox?"

Filbert did not hear a thing, but he told the rooster, "Yes, it is very lovely." He certainly did not want the chicken to think he was not special.

"Would you like to dance to the thistle whistle?"

"Why, yes, of course," the foolish fox answered.

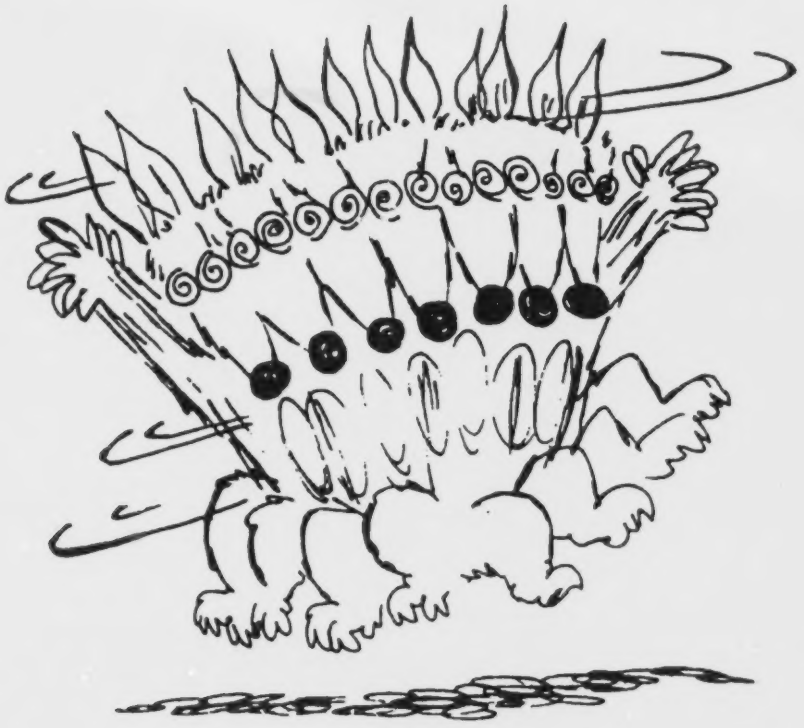
Brewster handed the whistle to the fox and said, "Now dance swiftly in a circle, Mr. Fox."

The fox did as he was told, and in a few minutes he was as dizzy as a top.

"I can hardly dance anymore," the fox said. His head was spinning round and round.

"Oh, go on. You are doing wonderfully," said Brewster.

The fox kept dancing and finally fell in a heap, his poor head reeling.



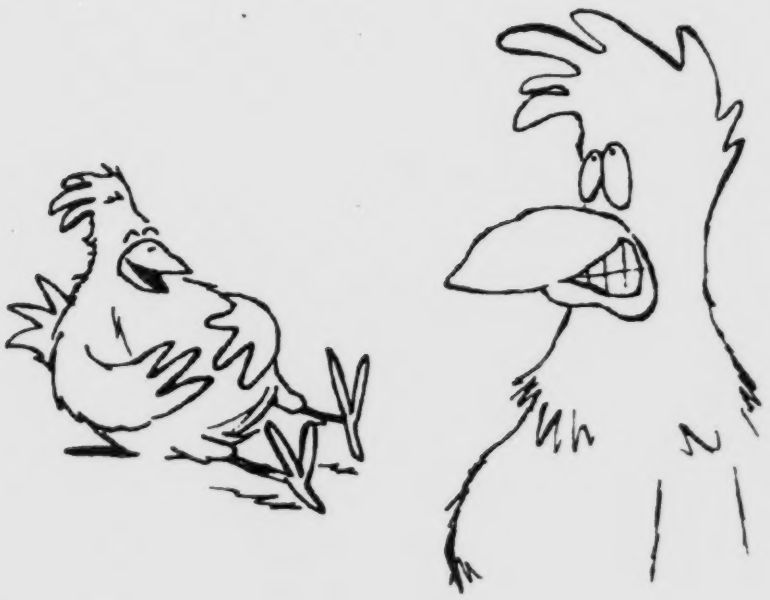
Brewster started laughing. "You silly fox, there is no such thing as a thistle whistle," he called, and he ran and ran until he reached the chicken yard.

"The fox almost got you, didn't he?" Harriet Hen asked.

"Almost," admitted Brewster, "but I outsmarted him." He told Harriet the tale.

"How funny it must have been to see a fox dancing to a silent tune," she said with a laugh.

"Thistle whistle!" Brewster laughed, but down inside he was still shaking. You can be sure he never took a walk outside the chicken yard again.



Things to do *after* reading the story

Because Filbert Fox is very proud, he is willing to pretend he hears something that he really doesn't hear. If you want to read another story about people who pretend something is real even though it isn't, go to your library and check out the book called *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

IS

A Friend for Ben

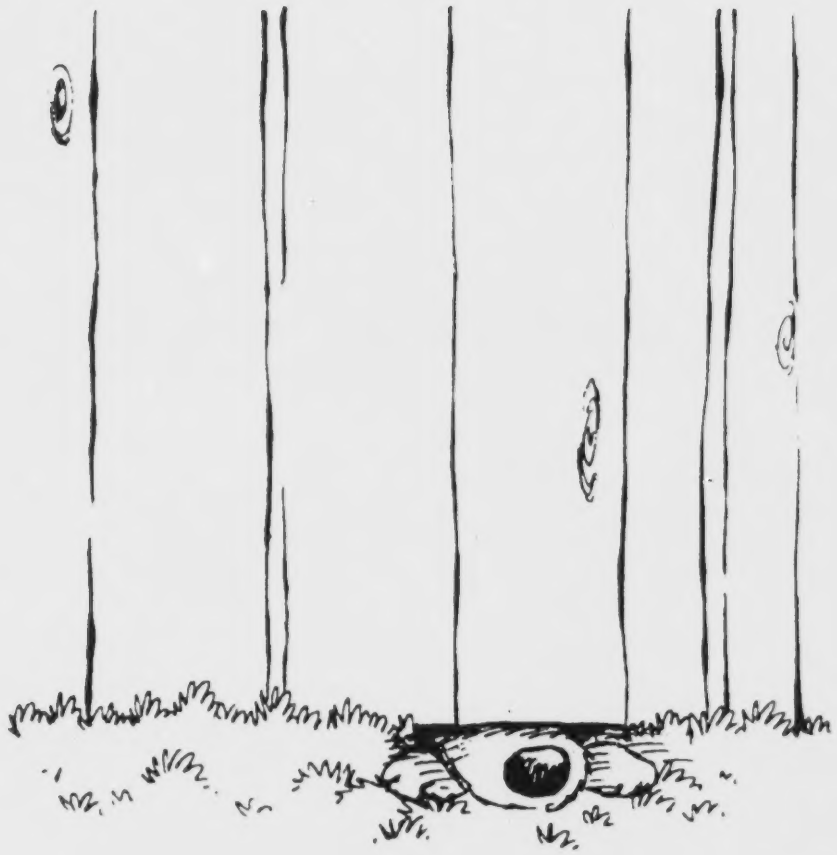
by John E Moore

Things to do *before* reading the story

Ben, the boy in this story, feels sad. But he finds a friend who makes him feel better. Together, talk about someone you know who makes you feel better when you are sad. Ask Mom or Dad who cheers them up when they are sad.

Tires screeched, and horns bellowed loudly. Ben snapped out of his daze as he stumbled over a crack in the sidewalk. Feeling lost and all alone, Ben kicked sluggishly at the crack, and plodded on. He was failing Math at school, his parents had grounded him, and his days were just generally boring. Ben didn't know it, but all of that was about to change.

"Hey!" he shouted, as a four-legged ball of brown and black fur shot from under a parked car and startled him. It crashed into his leg, tripped him again, and then disappeared under a wooden fence. Still on hands and knees, Ben crawled over to the fence and peered curiously underneath it. He pulled



back in shock when a small, wet nose nudged against his. The nose was followed by a pair of big, brown eyes that playfully returned Ben's gaze for an instant, and then disappeared. Soon, the nose poked out again, nostrils sniffing curiously. Ben sat back on his heels and chuckled. He had been playing peek-a-boo with a scared little puppy.

"Come out here, boy," Ben quietly coaxed, "I'm not going to hurt you."

"Woof!" went the little black and tan snout, and it poked out from under the fence again.

"Here, pooch, pooch," Ben pleaded, smooching his lips as if kissing someone.

Slowly the little German Shepherd pup crawled out of hiding, half-dragging, half wagging his furry tail in a sign of surrender. When he reached Ben, the pup rolled over, playfully wiggled his hind legs in the air, and let out a short whine.

Ben tickled his soft belly, and the little dog rolled over and sprung to his feet. He leapt playfully at Ben and snapped off a short yip. Before long, the pair had become friends, and the small Shepherd pup shadowed Ben all the way home.

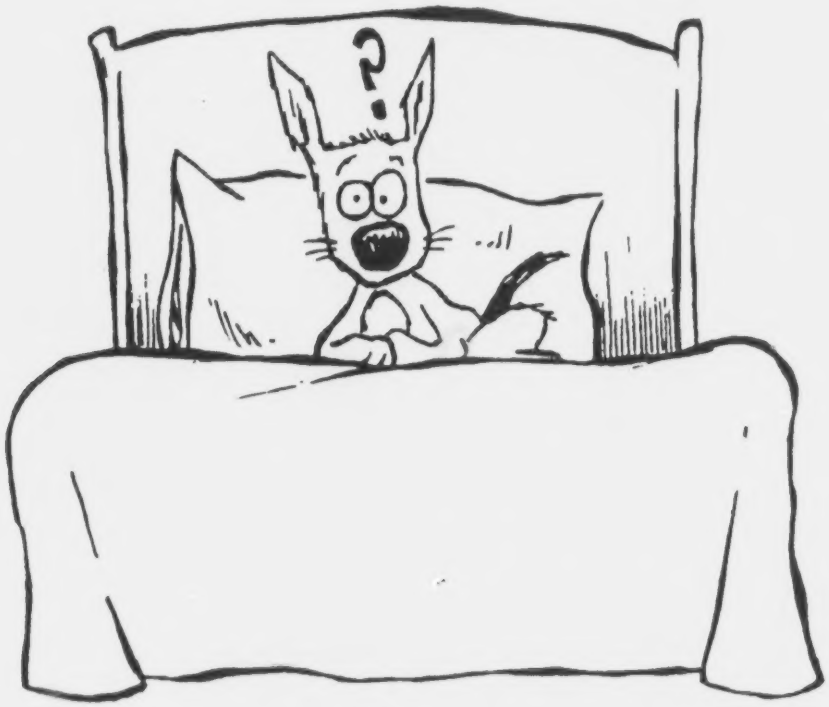
Ben silently opened the front door to his home, poked his head in, and peered nervously about. Finding the front room empty, he and his new friend cautiously sneaked across the floor. Then they quickly climbed the carpeted stairs leading to Ben's room. Once they were inside, Ben closed the door quietly. He flopped onto his bed, and coaxed the small puppy to come up beside him.

"Hans. That's a good German name. I'll call you Hans," Ben told his furry, little friend.

"Woof, woof!" Hans barked in agreement, and then cocked his head and looked curiously at Ben.

"Sssshhh!" Ben cautioned, "We can't let Mom and Dad know about you yet. Now stay here, and I'll go get us something to eat."

Hans' ears perked straight up, and he watched Ben open the door, slide out into the hallway, and close the door behind him.



Ben knew he was already in hot water when he strolled into the kitchen where his mother was working at the counter.

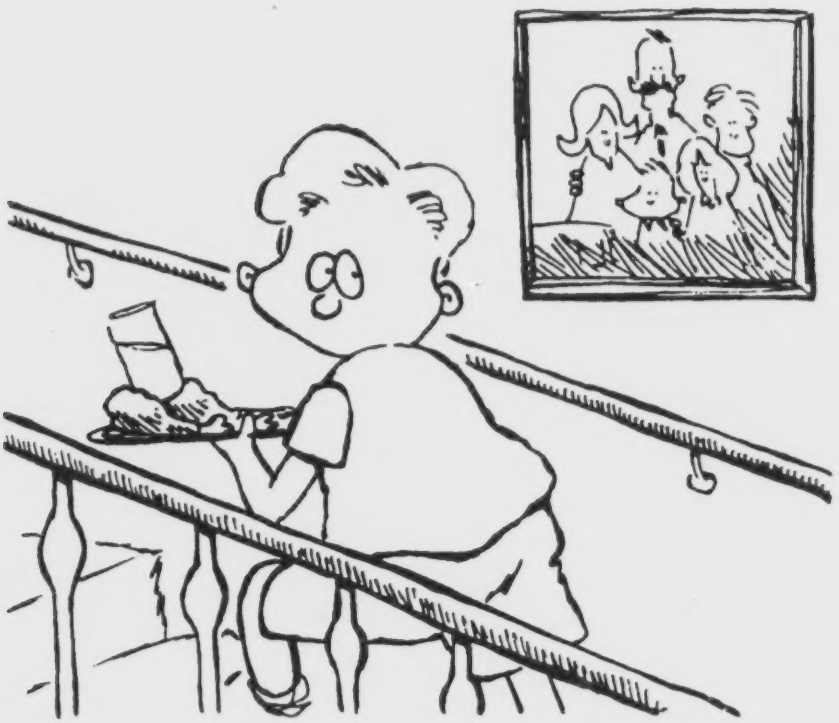
"Benjamin Martin, just where have you been?" his mother demanded.

"I'm sorry I'm late, Mom. I guess I just lost track of time."

"Still daydreaming, are you? Your dad and I thought we had cleared that up."

"C'mon Mom, I'm not a programmable robot."

He opened the door to the refrigerator, grabbed the plate with the leftover chicken on it, and pulled out the milk. He poured some milk into a glass and headed out of the kitchen, food and drink in hand. He was halfway up the steps when his mother's voice rang out.



"Ben, didn't you forget something?" she called after him.

"I won't need a napkin, Mom. I'll be really careful," Ben replied, and slipped into his room.

His mother just shook her head, put the milk container back into the fridge, and went back to making supper.

Ben closed the door, turned around, and set the plate of chicken on the floor.

Hans was not on the bed! Ben's eyes immediately shifted to the open window. "Oh no!" he thought, wishing he had shut the window before he had left the room. Sadly, he walked to the opening and looked out into the yard, hoping to spot his newfound playmate. Hans was nowhere in sight. Tears in his eyes, Ben turned from the window.

Suddenly, his eyes turned to the plate of chicken. He stared at the single drumstick on the plate, and a smile sneaked across his face. There had been two pieces of chicken, hadn't there? On hands and knees, he lifted his bedspread and looked underneath.

Han's nose poked out playfully, and then turned back to the piece of chicken in front of him. Ben sat back, wiped his eyes carefully, and took a drink from the milk. Now, all he had to do was convince Mom and Dad to let Hans stay.

That night at supper, Ben ate slowly because he was trying to decide the best way to introduce Hans to his parents. They just had to let the dog stay; they just had to. "Your mother tells me you were late again," his dad said, snapping Ben from his thoughts.

"Yes, sir, but not really late."

"Ben, don't you realize that you have to start being more responsible?"

Now was his chance, Ben thought. Responsibility was a good reason for keeping the Shepherd pup. Dad couldn't say no to that, could he?

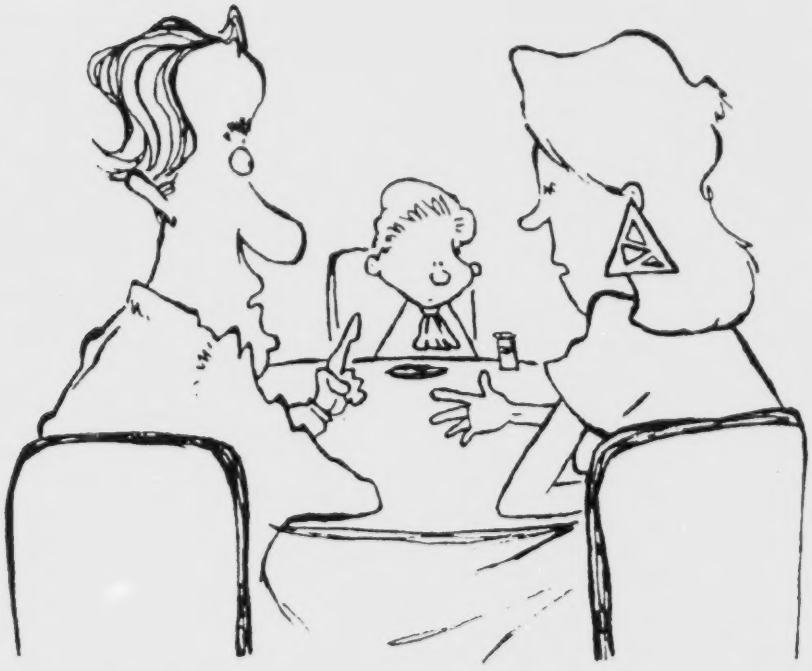
"I guess you're right Dad," Ben began. "Hey, what if I were to get a dog for a pet? Then I could learn to be more responsible, don't you think, Dad?"

"Sorry, son, but there's no way we could afford to buy a dog."

"Who says we need to buy one? There are free dogs all over. You never know when one's going to run out from under a car and trip you!"

Mother joined in, "He's right, Ralph. The local pound always has lost dogs that nobody claims, and they give them to good homes."

"I think Ben needs to concentrate more on his schoolwork and show us that he can handle more important responsibilities first."



Ben slowly walked from the kitchen, not bothering to excuse himself, and climbed the stairs. Then, an idea popped into his head. He would give his father a personal introduction to Hans, and with Mom on his side, he just might stand a chance of keeping the pup. He opened his door, and called for Hans. The pup needed no further encouragement, and he tore out from under the bed, ran past Ben, and then scooted down the stairs.

When Ben reached the kitchen, there was Hans standing on Ben's chair and eating from his plate. Oh boy! This was not what Ben had planned on.

He looked at his mom's shocked expression, then glanced at his dad. Dad's fork was halfway between the plate and his mouth, the spaghetti about to slide off. Boy, Ben had botched up this introduction completely. He dropped his head; there was no way they would let him keep Hans now.

"Ben," his father began, "If you're going to have a dog, you need to feed him once in awhile."

Ben looked up. His dad was actually grinning, having got over the shock of Hans' arrival for dinner.

Ben explained how he had found and made friends with the puppy. His mom and dad decided that before Ben could keep Hans, he would have to put an ad in the lost-and-found section of the local newspaper. Then, if nobody claimed Hans after two weeks, Ben could keep him.

Two weeks passed quickly, and Ben was learning how much work it took to keep Hans as a playmate. He had to feed Hans twice a day, make sure the puppy always had fresh, clean water, take him for walks, and be responsible for cleaning up any messes Hans made. Hans was a lot of trouble, but Ben decided he was worth it.

On the last day, while Ben and Hans were playing ball in the backyard, a car crept into the driveway. An older couple got out of the car and walked over to where Ben stood watching Hans chase the ball he'd just thrown.

"Good afternoon, young man," the man began. "Are you the one who ran the lost-and-found ad?"

Ben looked up, not wanting to answer, but managed, "Yes sir, I am. My name is Ben, and that's Hans. He's the pup."

Once Hans noticed the man and the woman, he let the ball roll under the bushes and ran over to them with his tail wagging.

"Hans, what a cute name," the woman remarked as she bent down to stroke the puppy's head. "He seems to be very fond of you. Are you sure he's lost?"

"Oh yes, ma'am," Ben answered, as tears began to crowd his eyes, and make his throat feel tight. Hans was acting like he knew these people! "I found him up town about two weeks ago, and he followed me home. Dad said I could keep him if no one claimed him after two weeks." Ben couldn't resist calling the pup. When he did, Hans bounced over and Ben put his arms around the dog's neck while Hans licked his cheek.

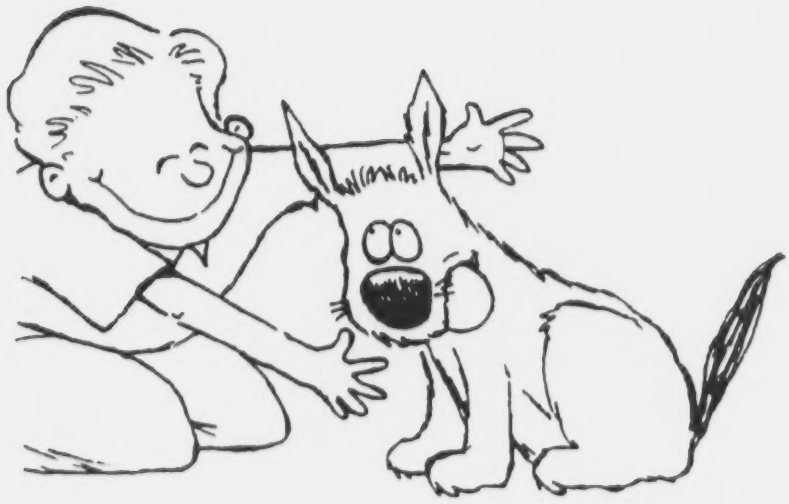
"Why the little guy acts as if he's known you all his life," the man said, giving Ben a concerned look.

"We've become pretty good friends. I'd hate to lose him." Ben noticed that his voice sounded shaky because he was trying so hard to hold back the tears.

The man glanced at his wife and then moved closer to her and whispered something in her ear. When he turned back to Ben he said "Well don't worry, I'm sure you won't."

The woman smiled, even though she looked a little sad. Then she added, "Yes, we had hoped he might be the dog we lost, but he's much more playful than the one we had."

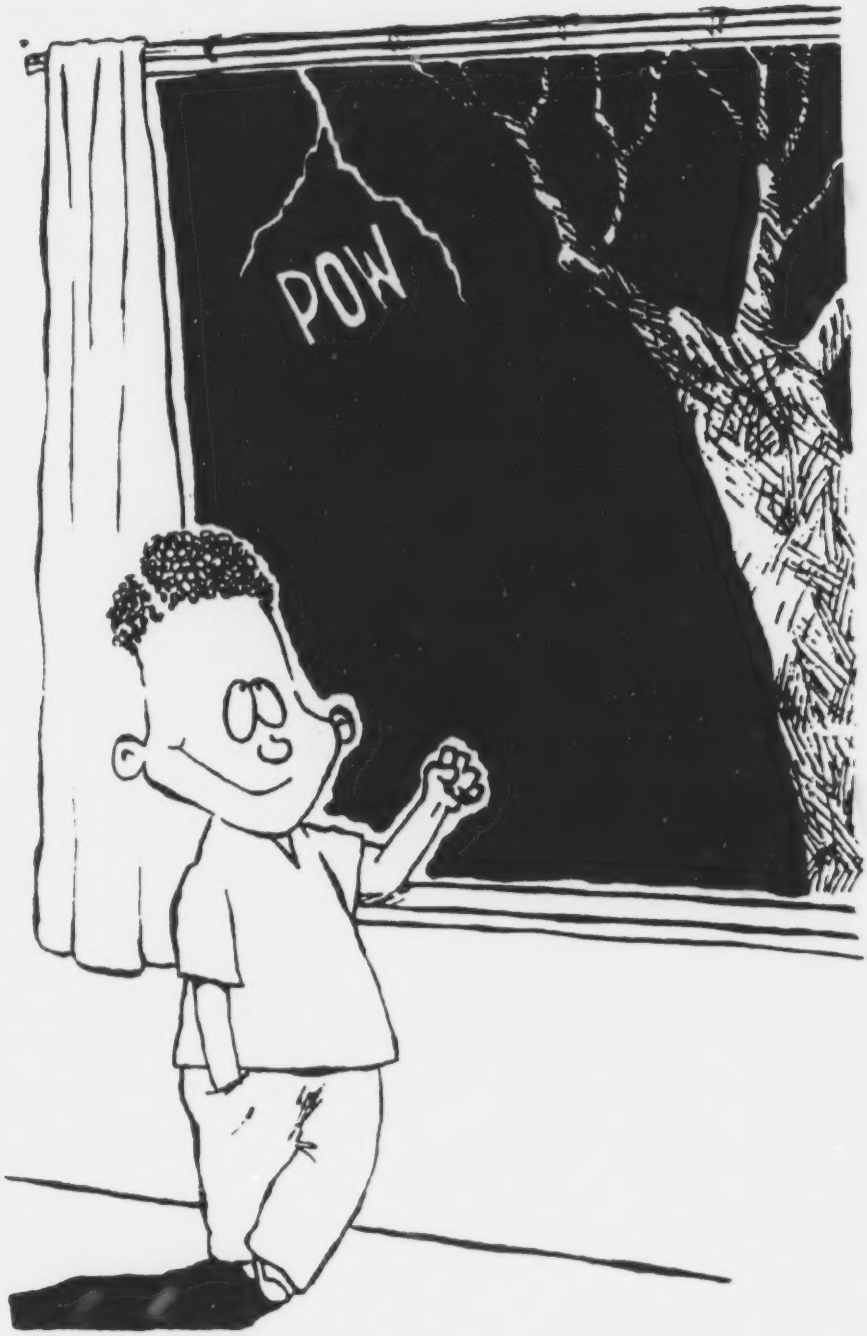
With that, the two said good-bye and turned and walked to their car. Ben watched as they backed out and drove off. Then Hans broke the silence with a loud bark and ran off to find the ball they had both forgotten about. When Hans brought the ball back and dropped it at Ben's feet, Ben reached down to hug and kiss his furry friend.



Things to do *after* reading the story

Do you think Hans was really the puppy the older couple had lost? If he was, why didn't they take him home with them?

As you read the story, you probably noticed that Hans cheers Ben up, but he also does something else for Ben. Together, talk about how having Hans as a playmate causes Ben to change his behavior. How do you think Ben is different at the end of the story?


POW

Friday Night Frights

By Winston Moon

Things to do *before* reading the story

A "fright" is something that scares you. Before you read the story, talk about things you think are scary. Do grown-ups ever get scared? Ask Mom or Dad what things they think are scary.

Ladd Thomas puffed his breath against the cool glass, making a foggy circle, then drew a face, the face of a bent-nosed, scraggly haired witch.

It wasn't fair, he thought. Grown-ups shouldn't get to boss kids around. He was ten-and-a-half—old enough to decide for himself.

Crack!

Ladd blinked, as a bolt of lightning lit the night sky. Seconds later there was a grumbling roar. Just outside the picture window, the wind swirled in the oak tree and made the branches wave, as if they were alive. Ladd twisted around, "See, Mom, it's perfect."

"I said no." His mother turned to Ladd's cousin Billy. "What would your mother say if she found out?"

"She won't mind, Aunt Lilly. She always let me watch Friday Night Frights."

Ladd's mother sighed. Her eyebrows formed two half-moons. "I don't know."

"Please, Mom." Heather lay on the carpet, resting on her elbows. She arched backwards as she pled with her mother. "We won't wake you up this time. Honest."

"Not her, Mom. Just me and Billy," said Ladd.

"If you get to stay up, so does she," said Mom.

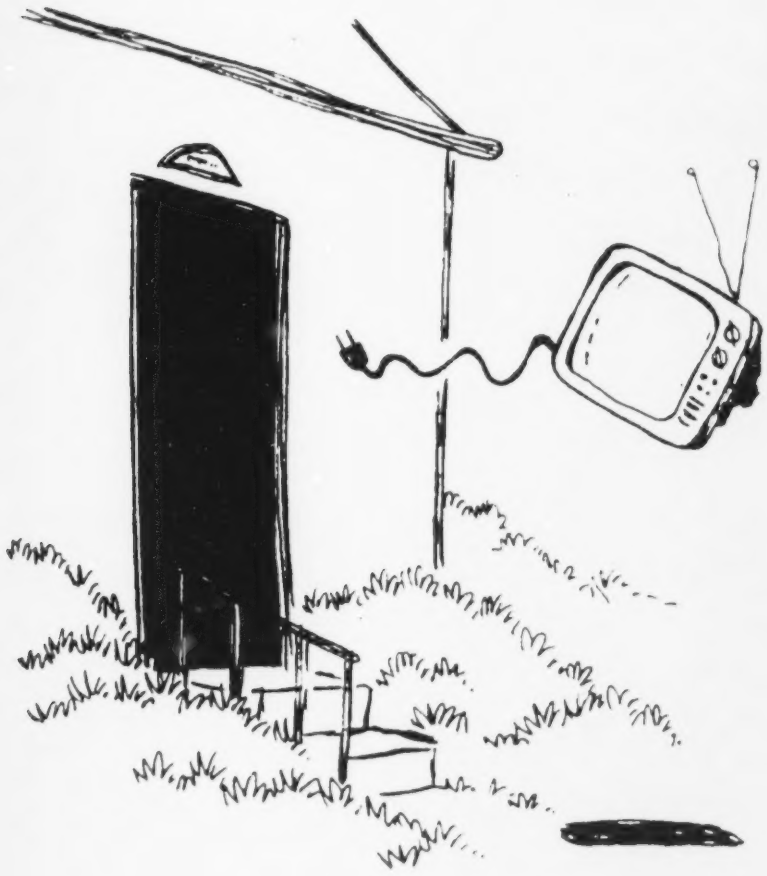
"But it was her fault last time!"

"Was not!"

"Enough!" said Mom. She glanced at each of the three children. She still didn't look too certain.

"Please," said Heather.

"Well...I guess it won't hurt. But I have to work tomorrow. If you wake me up this time, I'll throw the TV out for good!" Mom's eyebrows crunched together.



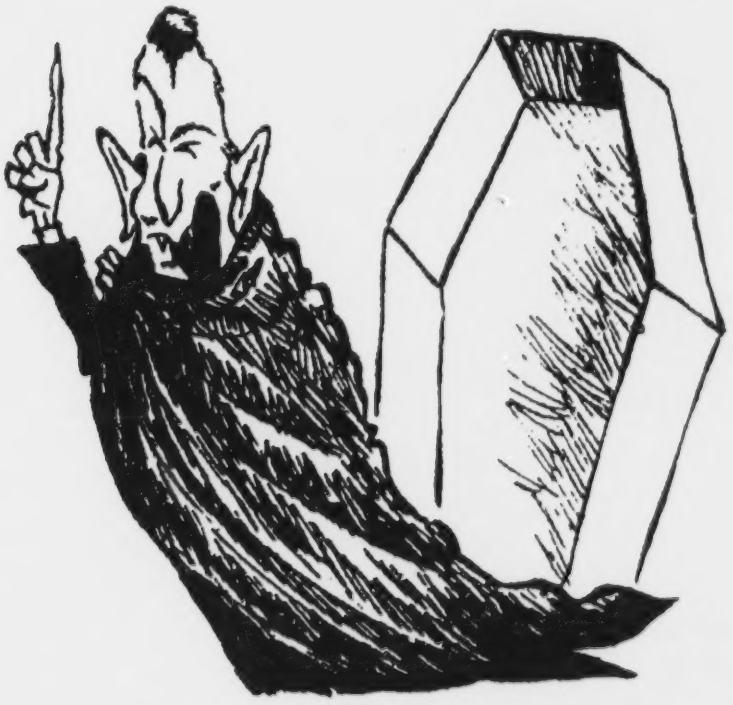
Mom eyed each of them, then headed for bed.

The kids ran into the bedroom, dragged three fluffy pillows back into the living room, and tossed them side-by-side on the floor.

"Turn out the lights. That'll make it even scarier," said Billy.

The bluish-green glow from the television cast long, flickering shadows on the walls. Ladd lay on the floor, with Heather and Billy on either side. The clock on the VCR blinked away the minutes. It was time.

On the television screen, black iron gates swung slowly open. Count Dorian stepped from his coffin, his black cape swirling around him like smoke. His face was the color of the full moon. "Don't go to sleep," he whispered. "The night has awakened. Don't go to sleep, or it will creep up on you." He laughed. Then a white fog swirled around Count Dorian and completely covered the screen.

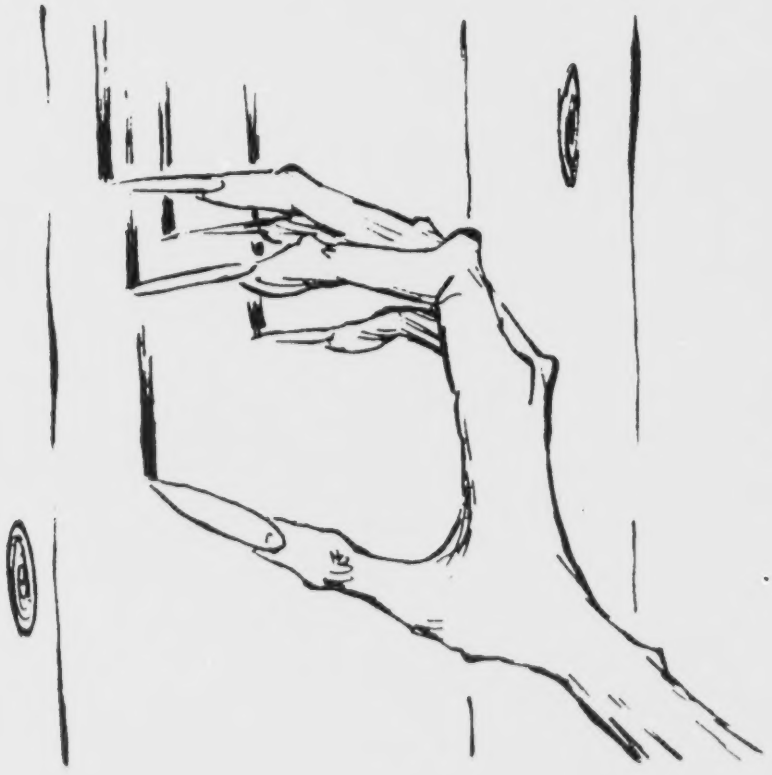


"This is great," whispered Ladd.

Ladd felt Heather squeeze closer. He rammed his elbow into her ribs. "Move over. Don't be such a baby."

She pretended not to hear and braced her chin in her hands.

Then the movie began; a couple was spending their honeymoon in an isolated cottage. A sound roused them from a deep sleep. The camera zoomed in on a gray, rotting hand. Long, gnarled, dirt-filled fingernails raked the wood on the side of the honeymoon cottage.



Scre-e-e-ch. Scra-a-ape.

"What was that?" Heather whispered.

Ladd's pulse pounded in his temples, and goose bumps covered his arms. The noise didn't come from the television. It had come from outside.

Ladd heard Billy suck in a quick breathe through his teeth. He'd heard it, too!

"Maybe it's a zombie, trying to get in," Heather whispered. "Want me to get Mom?"

"NO!" Ladd whispered back. "It was nothing. Forget it." He tried to convince himself, but the fluttering in his stomach wouldn't stop. "Shut up and watch the movie."

By now, the ghouls had found the cellar door. They swarmed around it and pulled it open.

Gro-o-o-an. Cre-a-a-k. Pop.

What was that?" Billy's voice was squeaky and strained. His face was white.

This time, the strange noise had come from the back of the house. Ladd's heart stopped, then beat double-time to catch up. "I don't know."

"Zombies," Heather whispered. "I'll get Mom."

"NO!" Ladd threw his leg across Heather's back, pinning her down. "Don't wake her up."

Heather tried to twist away. "But I'm scared."

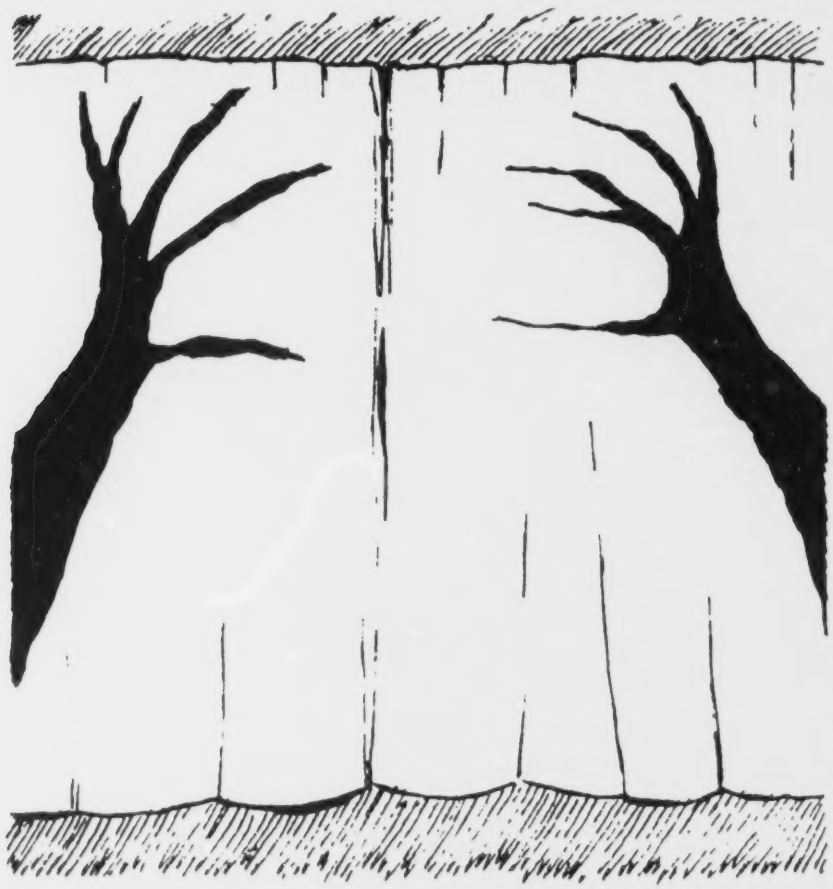
"Don't be such a baby. There's no such thing as zomb..."

Scre-e-e-ch. Scra-a-a-pe.

Ladd's heart stopped. Something was trying to get in through the picture window! He turned toward the sound.

Crack!

Lightning exploded across the sky. Behind the drapes, like a vision out of a nightmare, long shadowy arms reached for the window. Stick-like fingers touched the glass, screeching eerily as they raked against the pane. From the apparition came a moan, almost like the wind.



Heather screamed.

Bill ducked his head under his pillow.

The blood drained from Ladd's face. "Mom!" he screamed. "M-O-M!"

Later, Ladd lay in bed, watching the dim flicker of lightning against the venetian blinds. Above him, the springs squeaked as Billy rolled over in the bunk bed.

The sound reminded Ladd of the bony hand. When Mom had stumbled sleepily into the front room, he'd only been able to point at the drapes. She'd yanked back the drapes and shown them that the "zombie" was the limb of the oak tree, brushing against the window. Then she'd ordered them all to bed.

But the worst part was when she flicked off the TV and told them it would be two weeks before they could turn it back on.

Thanks a lot, Billy. You, too, Heather, thought Ladd. If you hadn't been such chickens we'd still be watching Friday Night Frights.

Ladd sighed. Of course, they weren't the only ones who had been scared.

Outside, thunder rumbled nearby. A fresh breeze stirred the trees. Ladd thought about the eerie scratching sounds and his heart skipped. Don't be dumb, he thought. There's no such thing as zombies. But as he drifted off to sleep, he pulled the blanket over his head. It never hurt to be careful, just in case!

Things to do *after* reading the story

The "zombie" that scared Ladd, Billy, and Heather turned out to be just the branch of an old oak tree. Can you think of another ending for this story? Begin at the point where the movie starts and rewrite the story's ending.

We hope you have had fun with these stories!

Part II
Guidelines for Parents

What is Teamwork Learning?

A new kind of learning is taking place in classrooms across the country. It's not so new, really. It is actually the kind of learning that was commonplace in the one-room schoolhouses where many of our great-grandparents learned reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. In the old one-room schoolhouse, students who had already learned a certain skill or mastered a concept helped others to learn it also. There everyone was a teacher and everyone was a student because they all learned from one another. Families who learn and work together have always been like that.

Today's educators are using this old and proven learning model in modern classrooms. Because these teachers recognize the value of team learning, they are organizing students to share their knowledge and skills with one another.

Here are some examples of activities going on in cooperative learning situations:

- In a first-grade classroom, two children sit in a corner on large pillows and hold between them a book that has both pictures and words. Each child has a pencil in his hand, and as they look through the book together, each of them stops now and then to circle a recognized word.

They talk about the pictures and about what they think is happening in the story. As they help one another figure out what is written the book, they look at the words they have circled. When they cannot understand a sentence because they don't recognize enough of the words in it, they ask another child for help.

These children are not afraid to say to a classmate or a teacher, "What does this mean?" because they are used to asking for help from others. They have been trained to see learning as a teamwork activity.

- In a fifth-grade classroom it is Math period, and the teacher presents a lesson on decimals. After the lesson is finished, students work in small groups doing decimal problems. They help each other put into practice what the teacher has told them. Because the students work in teams, each member shares his or her understanding of decimal problems with other members who are having trouble getting a grip on the idea. They study worksheets and work problems together. Helping each other seems quite natural to these fifth graders.

  Even though they study together, students take their test on decimals individually. The teacher rewards their cooperative effort. She gives special recognition certificates to the team whose members show the largest total improvement over their previous test scores.

- A classroom of sixth graders has been reading different books, which deal with the common theme of survival in the wild. After each of the students has finished a novel, they all meet in small groups to write stories that explore the same theme of human beings trying to survive in the wilderness.

  Each child plays a different role as they decide about the setting, characters, and the main challenge or predicament which will face the characters in their story. After they have talked these problems out, they spend several days composing their story; then they read it to the rest of the class.

  These sixth graders have not only learned something valuable about how literature is created, they have also learned important lessons about how to work with and get along with others.

All of these students are learning cooperatively. They cooperate in order to learn, and in doing so they share their knowledge and understanding. Learning in a team helps these students accomplish a common and clearly defined goal, and it helps them learn how to help one another. Your family can also act as a learning team in which individual members help each other learn and grow and accomplish important goals.

Children Learn Better in Teams

Studies indicate that there is less rivalry and more friendliness in classrooms (and families) in which people learn cooperatively. Cooperative learning also seems to encourage students who are overly aggressive or especially shy to integrate themselves into the group more easily than they do in a more competitive situation. Teamwork learning helps children realize that they need to listen to one another, and that they need to work through difficulties and misunderstandings if they are going to accomplish their goals.

Studies prove that children who help one another learn:

- have higher motivation,
- show academic improvement,
- experience increased self-esteem,
- develop a more positive view of the intentions of others,
- more easily accept that others may be different,

- feel less dependent on their teacher or parent,
- achieve higher test scores.

Cooperative learning seems especially valuable in activities that pose problems that need to be solved. It promotes critical thinking because learners must work together to define a common goal and then devise strategies for reaching that goal. In my family, when a third grader got the assignment of figuring out what early explorers in the Canadian Yukon could

find to eat, we all got involved. An older brother said he would search the encyclopedia. Mother called Uncle Bob who worked on an oil pipeline up there. The third grader called the librarian for answers. Together, we solved the problem and in the process we taught each other a lot more than the answer to this single question.

Help Your Children Claim Ownership of What They Know

Have you ever had the experience of helping your child with her science project and then discovering that it has suddenly become your science project? The example of the family solving the Yukon question shows you ways of having several participants without taking the project out of the hands of the true owner.

Learning is an active process. Research indicates that children more easily learn and most effectively remember knowledge that they have in some way dramatized or performed. Acting out, or talking, singing, or writing about new knowledge is a way for children to claim ownership of new ideas and incorporate them into their own understanding of the world in which we live. The give-and-take involved in teamwork learning promotes this kind of ownership.

What Is the Parent's Role in Team Learning?

In most classroom situations, the members of a learning team are of more or less equal status in knowledge and experience, so that they can trade off roles as tutor and student, leader and follower. But in the case of parents or teachers involved in cooperative learning with children, the roles are more clearly defined.

When one member of a team has greater knowledge than the others, that member can lead the initial conversation in such a way that he helps the other members to think and talk until they arrive at their own conclusions. In this way, adults enable children to come up with procedures, knowledge, or skills that will be useful in other situations beyond the immediate one. If I give my daughter the answer to a long division problem she is struggling with, I have helped her through her immediate difficulty, but I have not helped her learn how to think about long division problems.

The major goal of the teacher or parent in collaborative talk is to direct the conversation so members of a learning team are able to make connections which lead them to conclusions of their own making. In this way, children become progressively more capable of taking responsibility for their own learning.

How can parents be most effective in leading children to their own conclusions? Try following these simple guidelines:

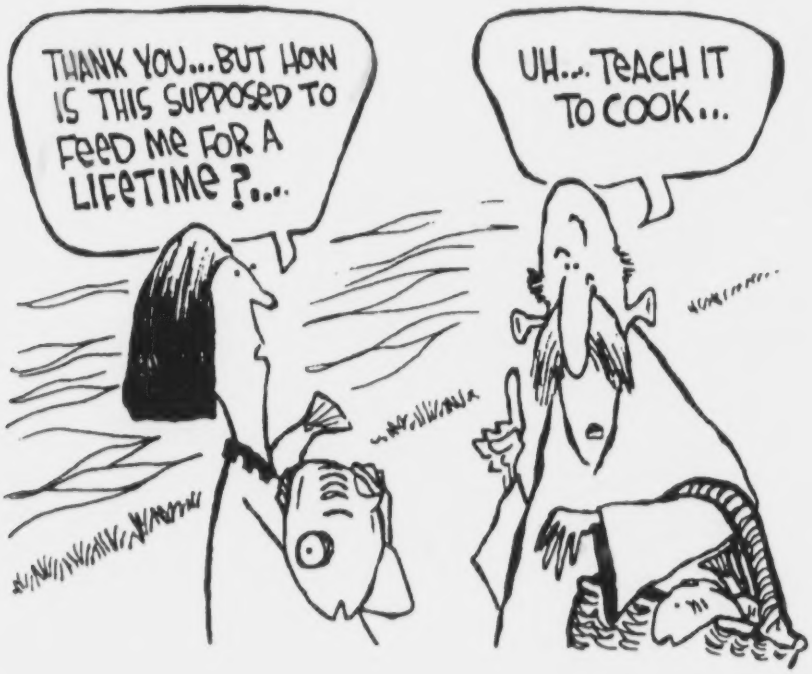
- Take the child's attempt to solve the problem on his own seriously. Give him credit for putting forth his best effort. Say to him: "You are right in asking for information. Keep asking and searching until you have what you need to decide on your answer."

- Listen carefully as your child tells you what she understands about the problem or the project. Ask her to explain or provide examples for certain points which you find a little hazy. Ask lots of "why" and "how" questions. By explaining things to you, she may understand what she still needs to investigate.

- Make sure you have clearly understood your child's explanation of his goals by rephrasing what he has said to you. Using his own account as a starting point, repeat or extend or develop what he has said. Encourage your child to push his own ideas further if necessary. You can do this just by echoing his own statements. Say something like "So I hear you are going to do thus and such . . ." then pause to give your child time to further explain or clarify his plan if he needs to do so.

- "Lead from behind" by offering only enough feedback to help your child figure out the problem for herself. Your role is to be an "active" listener who repeats and reviews and occasionally gives advice. To "lead from behind" you must be careful not to take over the project. Respect and support your child's efforts to work through her own problems.

Remember the old saying, "Give a person a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a person to fish and feed him for a lifetime." When it comes to our role in



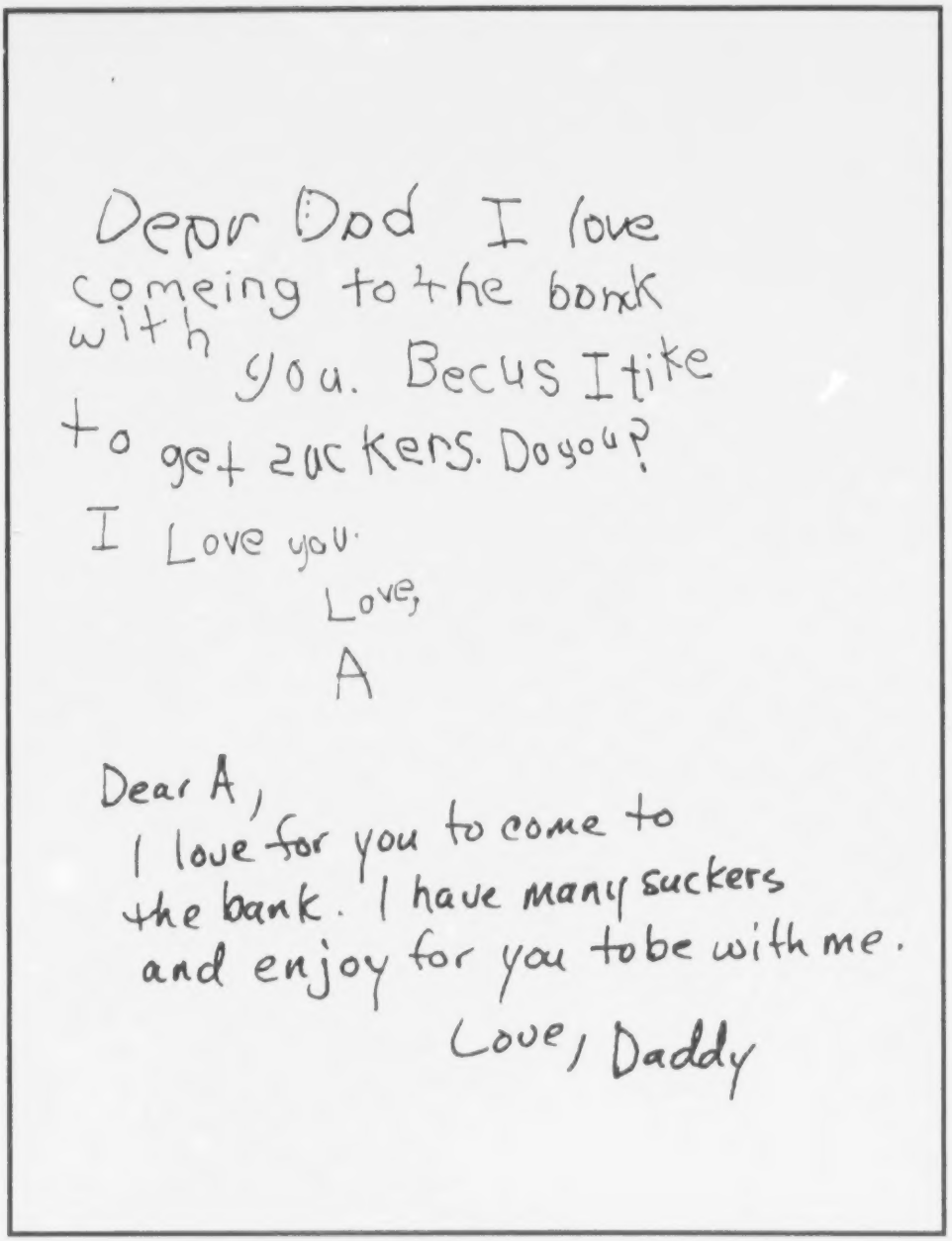
cooperative learning, we contribute most by helping our children realize that they can solve many school problems with just a little guidance from Mom and Dad. Teamwork learning means that everyone has a chance to do his or her own part.

Dialogue Journals: A Different Kind of "Talking Book"

Barbara Bode is an elementary and middle-school principal in Tampa, Florida

Starting a dialogue journal is one way you can become more involved in your child's education. In a dialogue journal, two or more people take turns talking to one another in writing. You can start such a journal in an old notebook or writing tablet that you leave in a special place where each of you can make frequent entries. Keeping a dialogue journal is a way for two people to hold a conversation on paper. When a parent keeps a dialogue journal with a child who is just learning to read and write, that parent helps her child see how genuinely useful reading and writing actually can be.

When children use writing to gain information, express their feelings, persuade others, or imagine stories, they are writing to achieve a purpose. Printing messages to their moms or dads helps young children learn how to use written language to express their own meanings—it allows them to play with writing and see how to use it to communicate messages that are important to them.

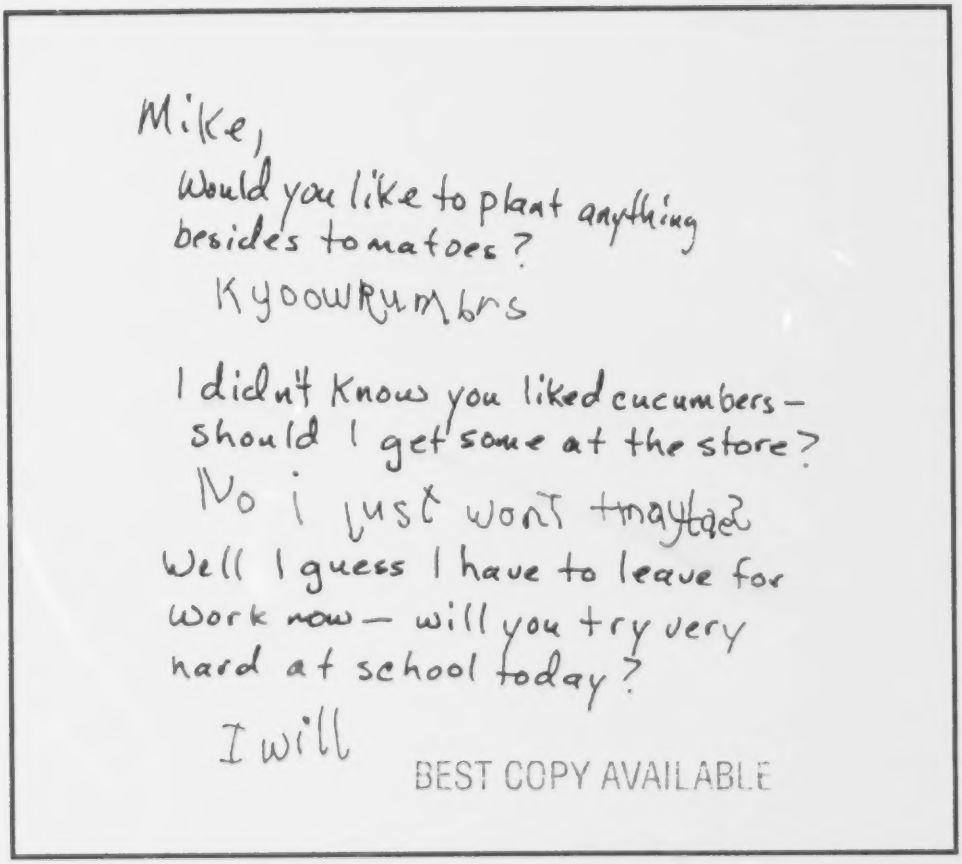


Dialogue journal writing helps children see the connection between listening and speaking, and between reading and writing. Even kindergartners can take advantage of opportunities to explore reading and writing in this fun, meaningful, and low-pressure way.

Children can be scared in situations where emphasis is placed on correctness rather than on the message the child is trying to get across. If a child is overly concerned about reversing a letter or misspelling a word, she may be too preoccupied to discover the real reason people write in the first place. By starting a dialogue journal with her, you can help your child discover how to make writing work to express an idea or a feeling that is important to her.

As she writes to you in the journal, encourage your child to spell words "creatively" or to "invent" spellings. This will allow her to play with language and see learning to write and spell as a fun activity rather than as a test she might fail. Children can figure out the relationships between sounds and letters, and they can use this knowledge to express themselves creatively in writing.

Children are often better at sounding out words than are adults who tend to ignore similarities between the way words look and sound. For instance, your child might spell the word "truck" as "chruk" because that is the way it sounds to her. Children will usually start spelling by giving the initial consonant only. Later, as they become more accustomed to writing, they will combine the final consonant with the first one (i.e., 'b' and then 'bl' for 'ball'). Studies show that as children develop, they will add vowels to the consonants so that their words begin to resemble more predictable spelling patterns. In order to make sure each of you understands the other's written message, you and your child can read your entries out loud to one another.


Mike,
Would you like to plant anything besides tomatoes?
Kyoowkumbrs

I didn't Knows you liked cucumbers – should I get some at the store?
No i just wont tmaytaes
Well I guess I have to leave for work now – will you try very hard at school today?
I will

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Right now you are probably wondering how your child will ever learn to spell properly if you encourage her to invent spellings for words she doesn't really know how to spell but wants to use. She will learn to

spell correctly over time. Give her a chance to learn gradually. Your role in this activity is to quietly model correct spelling for your young dialogue partner. This is another opportunity for you to serve as a good example for your child. To do this, you merely need to rephrase or repeat your child's entry as you add something of your own to it. Notice how the parents conversing with their children in the above examples are careful to repeat the words their children invented spelling for.

Young children need opportunities to play with reading and writing. Rereading familiar stories and scribbling messages using invented spelling enable young children to express themselves in print at an early age. Writing with invented spelling allows a child to feel free to explore, and try out ideas. As an adult persists in quietly giving "correct" models of spelling for a child, the child's knowledge grows naturally. In this kind of dialogue or exchange, parents have the opportunity to model language and literacy for their children.

This practice of imitating models is similar to the way children learn to speak. Dialogue journal writing helps children to learn that print is just speech written down. Children can learn to write and read by following a similar model of learning.

Dialogue journal writing has definite, long-range benefits. It helps children understand that writing is for meaningful communication. This fun activity will help your child develop a more positive attitude toward the confusing process of learning to read and write. And a dialogue journal is a wonderful written record of a child's journey toward literacy. What a delightful gift you can hand back to your young one once he or she has grown up. The dialogue journal you begin with your child today could become a valued keepsake in the years to come.

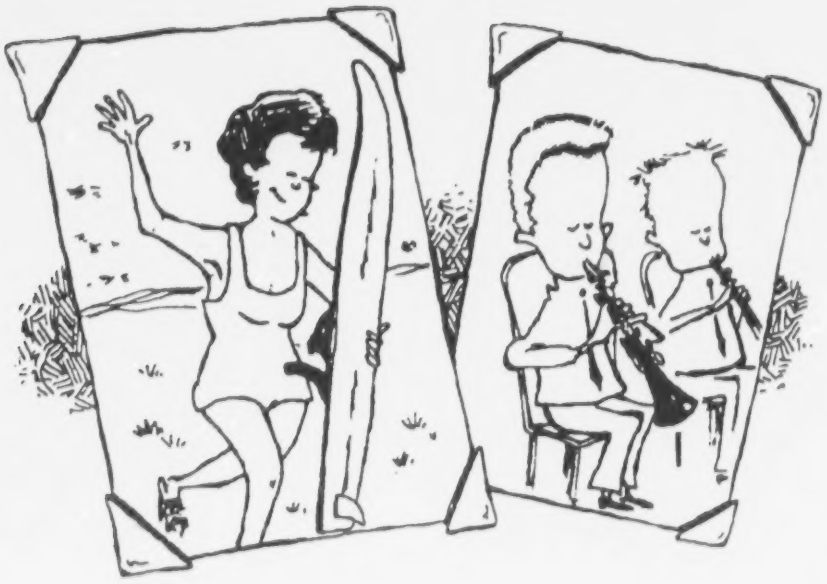
Activities for Fun and Learning

Try a few of the following activities with your children to help them learn together.

Who's Next?

- Practice your cooperative learning and thinking skills by making up and telling stories together. On an evening when the whole family is having dinner together, take some time after the meal to do this fun activity.

  One person begins by imagining and then describing the setting of a story you will all tell as a group. This first person talks about where and when the story takes place. The next person describes the characters in the story and gives them names. Then the rest of the people at the table take turns telling the story. Each of you makes up two or three sentences that tell what happened to these people in this place. Go around the table and give everyone a turn to contribute until someone decides how to end the story. You might even want to ask one member of the family to write the story down as it is told (or you could record the story more easily by just turning on a tape recorder).



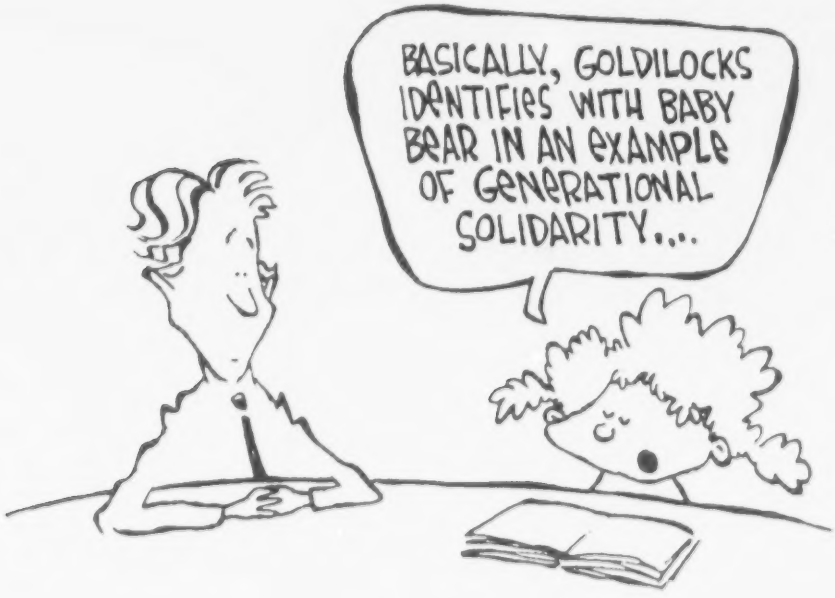
If you do this on a regular basis, the written down or recorded stories will make a wonderful addition to your family memory scrapbook or photo album. Wouldn't it be fun to be able to share these memories with your children when they are grown up, or to pass these stories on to your grandchildren?

Journal Jotting

- Help your child learn that writing is a meaningful activity that he can use as a tool for personal expression. Begin a dialogue journal that you and your child can both contribute to on a daily basis. For information on how to do this, turn back a few pages to find the article by Barbara Bode entitled *Dialogue Journals: A Different Kind of "Talking Book."*

Reading Co-op

- Reading aloud can be a cooperative learning activity when you and your child discuss what is happening in the story, or when you let your child read to you. As you read a story to your child, pause now and then and ask him to interpret part of it. Ask him why he thinks a character does what she does. Ask your child to interpret or draw conclusions about the story as you read it, and then ask him to summarize it after



you have finished reading. Share your ideas and learn about the story together. You may be surprised by your child's interpretation of what happens in the story. You might also ask your child to read the story to you so that you can be the one to answer questions and offer opinions.

Your Turn

- Write a story with your child. Here is how: each of you writes a sentence, or part of a sentence, of the story. You might begin by writing, "Once upon a time there was . . . "

For example:

Once upon a time there was a beautiful . . .

. . . UNICORN NAMED REBECCA, AND SHE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL THAT HER HORN AND HER HEELS WERE GOLDEN.

She lived in an enchanted wood, where . . .

. . . ALL THE UNICORNS PLAY. BUT SHE WAS SAD BECAUSE SHE HAD NO WINGS TO FLY WITH.

And so many of the other unicorns teased her . . .

. . . BUT ALL OF THE OTHER UNICORNS WERE NOT AS BEAUTIFUL AS SHE, AND SO SHE DECIDED TO MAKE A PAIR OF WINGS.

Every day for many moons Rebecca gathered golden pieces of straw . . .

. . . TO MAKE WINGS WITH. BUT THE OTHER UNICORNS DID NOT THINK SHE COULD DO IT, SO THEY LAUGHED AT HER.

She did not give up, though; she kept working, and one night when the moon was full she . . .

. . . REALIZED SHE HAD GROWN BEAUTIFUL WINGS, SO SHE DID NOT NEED THE STRAW.

Rebecca said, "What shall I do with all of this straw?"

AND SUDDENLY FROM THE GROVE OF TULIP TREES SHE SAW A . . .

. . . fairy who said to her. Let me take the straw, please, and I will weave it into a golden castle for you to live in because . . .

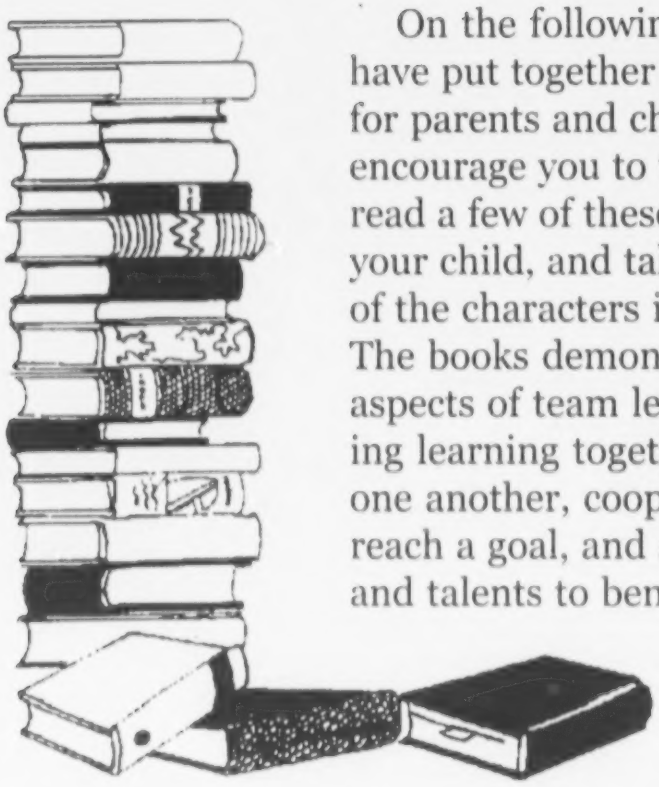
. . . YOU WORKED SO HARD TO MAKE WINGS AND NEVER GAVE UP.

Besides, I love you, and I want you to live happily forever. . .

. . . AND THE OTHER UNICORNS DIDN'T TEASE REBECCA EVER AGAIN, AND THEY WISHED THEY WERE AS BEAUTIFUL AND THEY HAD A CASTLE, TOO.

THE END

Books for Parents and Children



On the following pages we have put together lists of books for parents and children. We encourage you to take time to read a few of these books with your child, and talk about some of the characters in the stories. The books demonstrate different aspects of team learning, including learning together, teaching one another, cooperating to reach a goal, and sharing ideas and talents to benefit others.

Books for Parents

Raising Children with Character: Parents, Trust, and the Development of Personal Integrity by Elizabeth Berge. The book identifies general themes in the parents and children relationship and shows how to support and enhance positive character development.

The Value-Able Child: Teaching Values at Home and School. Grades K-3 by Kathleen L. Bostrom. This book shows parents, teachers, and group leaders how to work as a team to teach the values young children need to lead happy, "value-able" lives. The book's introduction defines values and presents a rationale for teaching values to young children in school and home-school settings, at home, and in community groups.

Learning the Skills of Peacemaking: A K-6 Activity Guide on Resolving Conflict, Communicating, Cooperating by Naomi Drew. Provides practical suggestions for parents and teachers to implement peace-making skills at home and classrooms.

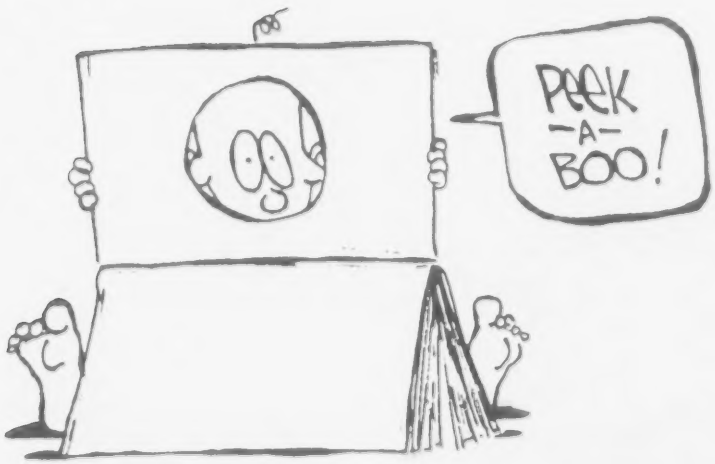
Raising a Thinking Child: Help Your Young Child To Resolve Everyday Conflicts and Get Along with Others by Myrna B. Shure and Theresa F. DiGeronimo. This books offers parents dialogues, activities, and communication techniques to teach their children how to resolve day-to-day conflicts with friends, teachers, and family members.

Books for Parents and Children to Share Together

We divide our book selections into three age categories (4–6, 6–8, 8–10). Some children will be able to read several of the books by themselves, but other books might be too difficult. With your children, look through the books at a library, school, or bookstore and decide which ones they can read. The books that are too difficult remain possible choices since you can read them aloud to your children.

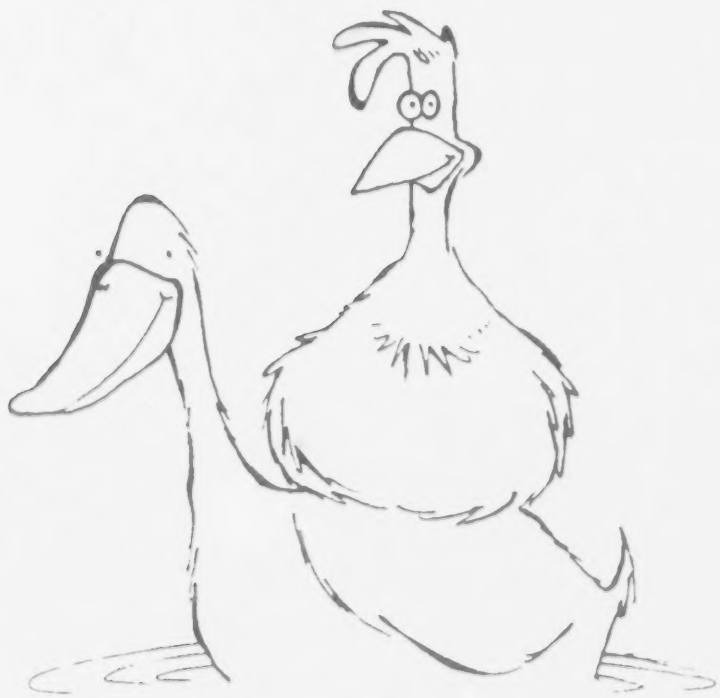
Ages 4-6

Guess What? (a Peek-A-Boo book) by Taro Gomi.
Parents and children can take turns or try to figure out together answers to clues that appear through the die-cut holes on each page. This book is small and the sturdy cardboard pages are easy to turn.



Guess Who? (a Peek-A-Boo book) by Taro Gomi. As in *Guess What?* die-cut holes appear on each page, but in this book, the holes are the eyes of various familiar creatures. Pictures, clues, and words help children identify each of these creatures.

Across the Stream by Mirra Ginsburg. A mother duck and her three baby ducklings work together to rescue a hen and her three chicks from a fox. Each duck carries a chicken on its back and swims across the stream to safety. Includes colorful illustrations and large, bold print.



Frederick by Leo Lionni. Frederick helps his family of field mice see that creatures need more than just shelter and food supplies to survive. Frederick contributes to the group's survival by using his imagination to create poetry and stories that sustain them during the long winter.

Hocus Pocus: A Pop-up Book by Julie Lacome. As a parent reads the text that asks a question about what the rabbit magician is doing, a child will be able to answer the question by manipulating the flaps, tabs, and wheels. This enables both to contribute to the "reading" of the book. Touches on colors, counting, and other basic concepts.

Guess What? by Mordicai Gerstein and Susan Yard Harris. Parents and children together can determine what might be in each surprise package the young girl in this book receives. Eleven fold-out flaps help to illustrate the numbers one through ten.

Ages 6-8

Who Is the Boss? by Josse Goffin. Two passengers argue over who is in charge and who is better, until their ship crashes and sinks. This short story with simple text demonstrates the importance of teamwork in reaching a goal.

While You Are Asleep by Gwynne L. Isaacs. Presents different night jobs some people hold, and indirectly shows the importance of their jobs to the community. Descriptions include the positions of bus driver, police officer, phone operator, nurse, and doctor.

Oh, What a Mess by Hans Wilhelm. Franklin the pig shares some ideas with his family that help them clean up their house and themselves. In the process, Franklin becomes a talented artist, and his family learns how to remain neat and clean.

Underwear! by Mary Elise Monsell. Zachary Zebra, Orfo Orangutan, and Igor Egret like silly underwear. Together they teach Bismark Buffalo how to laugh and have fun. Bismark not only learns how to enjoy life, but also how to be a cheerful friend to others.

Moose on the Loose, by Carol Partridge Ochs. A moose has escaped from the Zown Town Zoo, and a chartreuse caboose is missing from the railroad. An unlikely group joins forces to form a search party. They have a great time in their search for both adventurers.

New Kid on Spurwink Ave. by Michael Crowley. The kids in Leonard's new neighborhood think he is boring and doesn't know how to play. When Leonard teaches them other ways to play, they learn a few things about having fun, and finally they accept him into their "gang."

Ages 8-10

Shadowgraphs Anyone Can Make by Phila H. Webb and Jane Corby. Each page shows how to develop a shadow character using the hands. Short rhymes accompany each black-and-white illustration. Children can work with each other or with their parents to make the characters.

Bee Bopp by Stephen Cosgrove. When Bee Bopp moves to Buggville and begins Buttonwood school, she gets in trouble the first day and is suspended. Lord and Lady Bugg become her private tutors and help her see that a bug doesn't have to be rude and loud to get attention from others.

The Rag Coat by Lauren Mills. Minna does not have a winter coat, so the Quilting Mothers work together to make a rag coat for her out of their quilting scraps. When the children at school hurt Minna by making fun of her coat, she tells them stories about the origins of the different scraps. They share memories with each other and learn what it means to be a real friend.

The Long Red Scarf by Nette Hilton. Pop wants a scarf to keep him warm when he goes fishing, but he can't find anyone to make him one. Cousin Izzy and his friend Jake teach him how to knit so he can make a scarf for himself.

The Berenstain Bears and the Missing Honey by Jan and Stan Berenstain. Papa Bear's blackberry honey is gone and Papa Bear, Sister Bear, Brother Bear, Cousin Fred, and Snuff the Sniffer Hound form a detective squad to find out what happened to it. Together they search for clues and eventually solve the mystery of the missing honey.

Charlotte's Web by E. B. White. The Zuckermans plan to kill Wilbur the pig and turn him into bacon and ham. Charlotte leads a group effort to save him, and Wilbur assists her family in return. This is a touching story and works well as a "read aloud".

Magazines

Also ask your librarian for the following magazines:

Cricket

DuckTales Magazine

Highlights for Children

Kid City

Sesame Street Magazine

Wee Wisdom

Web Sites for Parents

Teaching Cooperation
http://www.sfparenting.com/character_tips.htm

Teaching Children Respect In An Age of Equality
http://www.wholefamily.com/aboutyourkids/children/respect.html

Cooperative Learning Strategies and Children. ERIC Digest
http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed306003.html

Web Sites for Children

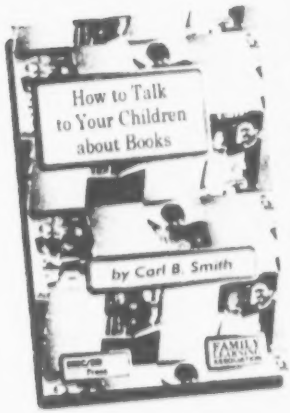
Character Bibliography–Cooperation
http://www.icsd.k12.ny.us/northeast/kbaum/Character%20Bib./decchar.html

Character Education Resource for Secondary Students: Cooperation
http://www.characterworks.com/secondary.html#anchor423905

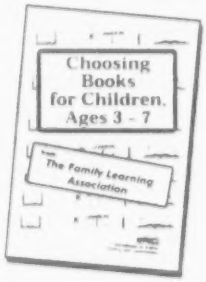
Character Education Resource for K-5 Grades: Cooperation
http://www.characterworks.com/elementarypages/cooperation.html

The ThinkQuest Library: Cooperation
http://library.thinkquest.org/J001709/thinkquest_values/8cooperation/cooperation_frameset.html

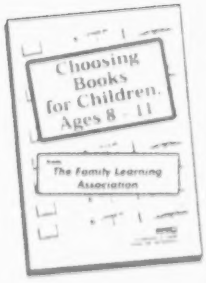
If you found this book useful, please try these other helpful books !



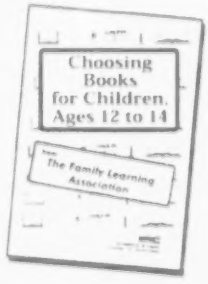
How to Talk to Your Children about Books *by Carl B. Smith*
Start a conversation that will last a lifetime. This book teaches you five easy techniques to prompt book discussions, guidelines for selecting books, how to make it a two-way exchange, plus motivation, values, and making it fun!



Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 7
Use this resource to appeal to a variety of interests in your kindergarten to primary-age children. Filled with great tips for keeping book conversations going, this book pinpoints a vast array of age-appropriate reading materials.



Choosing Books for Children, Ages 8 to 11
Quick summaries of a huge collection of titles will make it easy to provide good reading for your pre-teens. Top-notch authors, relevant themes, and sensitive issues make this a good companion at the library or bookstore.



Choosing Books for Children, Ages 12 to 14
Let literature open up discussion about some of the difficult issues your teen is experiencing. Includes a special section on communicating about books though writing and journaling.

For information about these and other helpful books
The Family Learning Association
3925 Hagan Street, Suite 101, Bloomington, Indiana 47401
1.800.759.4723 www.kidscanlearn.com

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